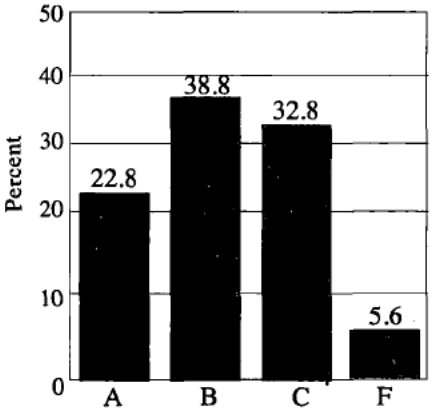
Reference Copy

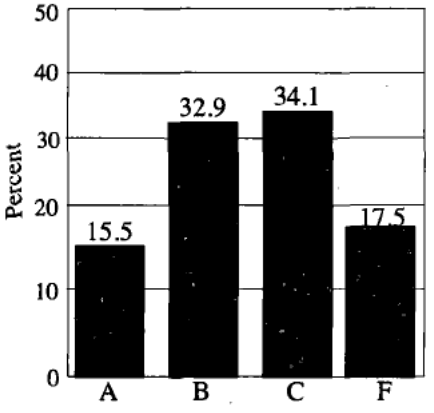
Social Studies 30

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for June 1995

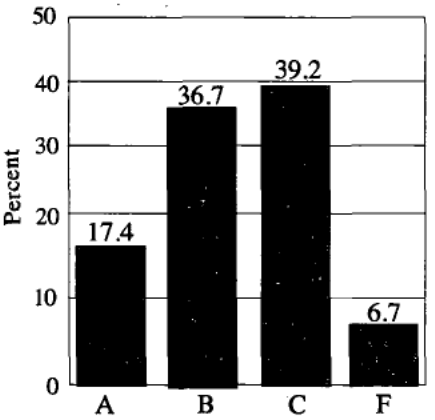
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public with an overview of results from the June 1995 administration of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been mailed to schools and school jurisdiction offices. An annual provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined January, June, and August results is published each year.

Description of the Examination

The Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a multiple-choice section worth 70% and a written-response section worth 30% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 11 158 students who wrote the June 1995 examination.

- 93.3% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 17.4% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Overall, student achievement in Social Studies 30 was satisfactory. Students demonstrated a good grasp of Social Studies knowledge. In composing their essays, many students were able to express a clear understanding of the issue under discussion and were aware of how to develop and organize an argumentative paper. With the addition of a discretionary half-hour of writing time, students can focus more on planning, editing, and proofreading their written work.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 68.4%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 63.8%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 66.4%.

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Student Evaluation

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Part A: Multiple Choice

Examination Blueprint

Part A: Multiple Choice has a value of 70 marks, one mark for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: according to the curricular content area (topic) being tested and according to the knowledge and skill objectives required to answer the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in June 1995 according to these classifications.

All questions on the diploma examination require students to demonstrate knowledge of social studies content and to apply social studies skills to that knowledge base. The reporting categories below define the general types of questions that appear on the examination and the categories for which information is reported.

Question Classification by Knowledge and Skill Objectives		Question Classification by Topic		Total Questions
		Topic A: Political and Economic Systems	**Topic B: Global Interaction in the 20th Century**	
		Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the world's political and economic systems as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	Knowledge and application of facts, concepts, and generalizations related to the interaction of nations since 1918 as outlined in the *Program of Studies*.	
	Comprehension of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of generalizations, key concepts, and facts related to social studies content.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 33	38, 44, 46, 47, 48, 56, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70	24
	Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate their knowledge of social studies content by interpreting and analyzing information and ideas.	6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 19, 20, 24, 30, 31, 34	36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 49, 50, 51, 54, 57, 58, 61	24
	Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas These questions require students to demonstrate and apply their knowledge of social studies content by synthesizing information and ideas and evaluating their accuracy and worth.	7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25, 35	37, 43, 45, 52, 53, 55, 59, 60, 62, 68, 69	22
	Total Questions	**35**	**35**	**70**

*Subtest Results**

Results are reported in average raw scores.
Total Part A: 46.1 out of 70.

by Topic
- Political and Economic Systems: 22.6 out of 35
- Global Interaction in the 20th Century: 23.5 out of 35

by Knowledge and Skill Objectives
- Comprehension of Information and Ideas: 16.0 out of 24
- Interpretation and Analysis of Information and Ideas: 16.6 out or 24
- Synthesis and Evaluation of Information and Ideas: 13.5 out of 22

*Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school results.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	C	80.6
2	D	75.4
3	B	73.7
4	A	67.0
5	C	68.5
6	C	64.5
7	D	70.5
8	A	59.5
9	C	82.4
10	D	66.3
11	D	66.1
12	B	65.7
13	A	74.4
14	B	70.4
15	C	68.1
16	A	71.2
17	D	54.0
18	B	67.1
19	B	66.9
20	A	83.8
21	A	67.6
22	B	53.0
23	D	49.8
24	D	74.1
25	C	51.8
26	A	62.0
27	D	67.2
28	C	54.2
29	A	62.9
30	C	44.8
31	B	66.1
32	A	41.8
33	D	66.5
34	B	64.1
35	C	33.2
36	A	68.4
37	B	52.9
38	A	55.1
39	C	73.1
40	A	71.1
41	D	71.8
42	D	63.8
43	B	74.8
44	A	85.5
45	A	46.6
46	B	42.1
47	C	71.4
48	B	69.2
49	C	61.3
50	C	70.0
51	A	65.8
52	A	85.7
53	D	67.8
54	C	72.4
55	D	47.5
56	B	78.3
57	C	81.1
58	D	74.3
59	B	65.1
60	C	64.6
61	D	87.9
62	A	56.9
63	D	73.2
64	D	56.0
65	A	82.1
66	B	68.2
67	A	73.4
68	C	44.1
69	D	76.9
70	D	55.1

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results with provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examiners' Comments

The multiple-choice section of the examination requires students to go beyond simply recalling information and to apply their knowledge and thinking skills. Students must demonstrate that they understand social studies concepts; that they comprehend historical, political, and economic relationships; and that they can interpret and evaluate social studies information and ideas.

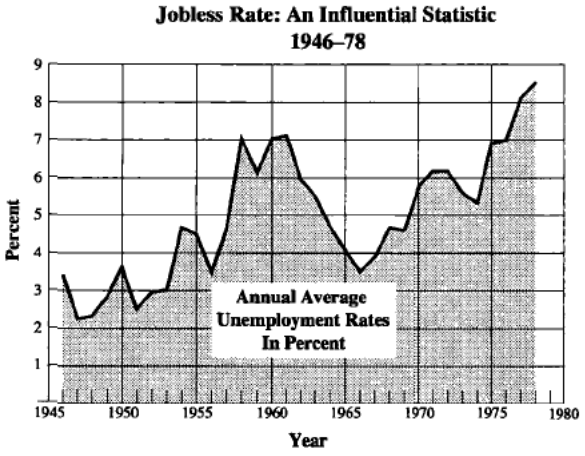
During the marking session, a committee of five classroom teachers of Social Studies 30 reviewed Part A to determine whether the standards embedded in the multiple-choice questions were appropriate and fair. The committee members generally concurred that this section of the examination set an appropriately demanding standard of achievement for graduating Social Studies 30 students. They found the data sources relevant and engaging and the questions challenging but fair.

The following table gives results for five questions selected from the examination. The table shows the percentage of students in three groups answering each question correctly. The comments on pages 4 and 5 discuss some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number				
Student Group	**11**	**13**	**23**	**35**	**43**
All students	66.1	74.4	49.8	33.2	74.8
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	88.9	92.1	78.3	56.9	96.2
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination.	60.0	70.4	40.6	25.0	68.8

Use the following graph to answer questions 11 to 13.



11. Given the information in the graph, a Keynesian economist would **most** likely have recommended an increase in government spending on public works between the years

A. 1946 and 1950
B. 1954 and 1957
C. 1960 and 1966
***D.** 1975 and 1978

13. According to the graph, the years between 1956 and 1962 would be classified as a period of relative

***A.** recession
B. expansion
C. inflation
D. development

23. Which title accurately describes the following chart?

The Soviet Union (1928–53)	▶ Kulaks, Trotskyites
Germany (1933–45)	▶ Bolsheviks, Social Democrats
Italy (1922–43)	▶ Liberals, Socialists

A. Communist Dictatorships and Their Opponents
B. Extreme Right Wing Dictatorships and Their Victims
C. Dictatorships and Their Supporters
***D.** Dictatorships and Their Scapegoats

Questions 11 and **13** were two of a set of three questions based on a graph indicating fluctuations in average unemployment rates over a period of several decades. Both questions are classified as Interpretation/ Analysis questions on Topic A.

To answer question 11 correctly, students had to decide, from a Keynesian perspective, when best to recommend government spending as a stimulus to reduce unemployment. To do so, students had to recognize the significance of the direction of various trends shown in the graph and understand the relationship between these trends and the need for intervention. This question was not overly difficult: 66.1% of all students (88.9% of those students achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly.

Question 13 required that students first recognize the meaning of a specific unemployment trend over a certain period of time. They then had to apply this recognition to their understanding of the concept that best defines the nature of the economic characteristics to be expected from this trend. This question, as well, did not prove to be difficult: 74.4% of all students (92.1% of these students achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly.

The achievement results for these questions (and similar ones throughout the examination) are a credit to the critical thinking skills demonstrated by many Grade 12 Alberta social studies students in their approach to source material presenting relatively sophisticated information and ideas.

Question 23 tested students' ability to select a correct title that summarized a common relationship among a number of items—nations, historical periods, and political/economic groups—shown in a chart. Students had to recognize that the nations within the time period shown were dictatorships and that the groups indicated were often the targets of blame and oppression. This question is classified as a Synthesis/Evaluation question on Topic A.

Students found this question difficult, with only 49.8% of all students answering correctly. However, 78.3% of those achieving the standard of excellence chose the correct response. The fact that 25.2% of students who achieved between 50% and 64% concluded that the data in the chart represented "Communist Dictatorships and Their Opponents" suggests some serious gaps in knowledge and conceptual understanding or that many students did not read the question carefully.

Use the following quotation to answer question 35.

> In Germany, they came first for the communists, and I did not speak up because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up for me.
>
> —Martin Niemoeller

35. The intent of the author, in communicating these ideas, is to suggest that

- **A.** authoritarian regimes flourish in deeply divided democratic societies
- **B.** authoritarian regimes primarily target ideological differences as the object of their opposition
- * **C.** dissent toward the policies of authoritarian regimes is ultimately an individual responsibility
- **D.** dissent toward the policies of authoritarian regimes must be made swiftly and with violence

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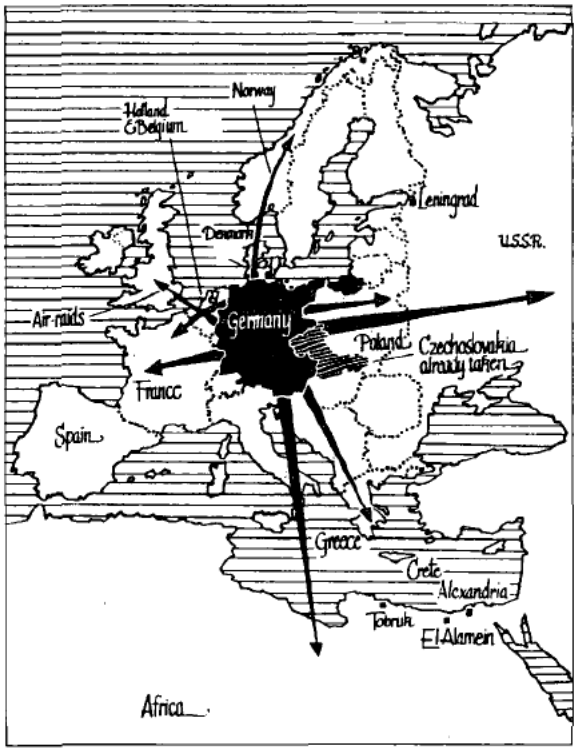
Use the following map to answer questions 43.



—from *World Affairs 1900 to the Present Day*

43. What is the **best** title for this map?

- **A.** Germany's Diplomatic Moves, 1933–1938
- * **B.** Germany's Offensives, 1939–1942
- **C.** Extent of Axis Influence, 1944
- **D.** Extent of Hitler's "Final Solution," 1945

Questions 35 required students to determine an author's *intention* by carefully reading a number of related ideas in a quotation. This question is classified in the blueprint as a Synthesis/Evaluation question on Topic A. The question was difficult: only 33.2% of all students (56.9% of those achieving the standard of excellence) answered correctly.

The fact that 54.4% of all students concluded that the author's intent was to point out that authoritarian regimes target different ideological groups for oppression indicates that many students failed to grasp the significance of Niemoeller's prescient message. His statement was not intended as notice of an historical fact. Rather, it rises to a level of moral and ethical concern and presents a warning for us all through the admission of his failure as an individual to respond to totalitarian oppression at the onset and the dire consequences of that failure.

Question 43 required students to determine an appropriate title for a map indicating a series of major military offensives emanating from Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Question 43 is classified as a Synthesis/Evaluation question for Topic B. To answer correctly, students had to demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills by recognizing various clues provided by information in the map. Because no legend was included, students had to establish their own historical context and frame of reference for the map by detecting and relating important details. The question was not difficult: 74.8% of all students (96.2% of those students achieving the standard of excellence) chose the correct response. However, a closer statistical review of this question reveals that of the total number of females who answered question 43, only 65.3% answered correctly compared to 85.6% of males.

Part B: Written Response

The results for the written-response section of the Social Studies 30 Diploma Examination are tabulated according to the percentage of students achieving at each level (1 to 5) in each of the scoring categories. Each scoring category assesses somewhat different skills; consequently, individual student's scores are likely to vary from one category to another. Those students who achieve at or above the standard of excellence (80%) on the written-response section have scores of **(4) Proficient** or**(5) Excellent** for all scoring categories. Students just meeting the acceptable standard (50%) on the written-response section have scores of **(3) Satisfactory** for some scoring categories but produce **(2) Limited** work for others. Students who produce **(3) Satisfactory** work for all scoring categories receive scores of 18 out of 30 on Part B.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignment and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing these results is at the **(3) Satisfactory** level. The scoring guides that describe proficiency levels are in the 1994–95 Social Studies 30 Information Bulletin.

The written-response section contributes 30% of the total examination mark. Students are required to write one complete and unified essay in which they discuss the importance and complexity of an issue and rationally defend their position by using supportive, relevant evidence. The organization of arguments should show evidence of logical thought that should persuade the reader. Students are expected to make use of their critical and creative thinking skills to demonstrate complex and independent thought.

Part B: Written Response has a total value of 30 marks: 10 marks each for *Defence of Position* and *Quality of Examples* and five marks each for *Exploration of the Issue* and *Quality of Language and Expression*. The average raw score mean for Part B was 17.7 out of 30. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

It should be noted that beginning in January 1995, a two-marker system was adopted for marking Part B; this means that it is now possible for students to be awarded marks that are midway between scoring criteria. (See the following table.)

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

		Percentage Distribution of Scores									
Scoring Category	**Proportion of Total Mark (%)**	**Excellent (5)**	**(4.5)**	**Proficient (4)**	**(3.5)**	**Satisfactory (3)**	**(2.5)**	**Limited (2)**	**(1.5)**	**Poor (1)**	**Ins***
Exploration of the Issue	5	3.0	3.7	11.2	13.2	25.3	19.8	16.8	5.0	1.9	0.3
Defence of Position	10	2.7	3.8	10.9	13.9	26.1	20.8	15.7	4.3	1.5	0.3
Quality of Examples	10	2.4	3.3	9.4	11.6	24.1	19.8	18.6	6.6	3.9	0.3
Quality of Language and Expression	5	3.0	4.2	13.4	15.9	38.2	15.5	7.5	1.5	0.5	0.3

* **Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded a **(3) Satisfactory** standard of performance.

Topic A

Some people believe that citizens should freely express disagreement with their government's policies and actions. Others feel that citizens should not. They believe that citizens should accept government policies without dissent.

To what extent should citizens express disagreement with their government's policies and actions?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Topic B

During the twentieth century, some nations have gained status in the international community through military strength. Other nations have gained status in the international community through other means.

Should a nation's status in the international community be determined solely by its military strength?

In your essay, take and defend a position on this issue.

Examiners' Comments

The results of the written component for the June 1995 examination showed the highest provincial average score yet achieved since the first administration of Social Studies 30 Diploma Examinations in 1984.

Growth in the effectiveness and thoughtfulness of the students' position papers was a prevalent observation made by many markers and those teachers involved in standards confirmation. Student writing was generally less rambling or rushed and more focused and controlled. Relatively few papers received a limited grade. As one marker commented, "many students were successfully applying their knowledge rather than burying us in detail."

On both topics, many students used a wide range of examples both current and historical and a wide range of approaches that precluded identifying "typical papers." Many students, as well, used ideas and information from the multiple-choice section of the examination in a way that enhanced their writing. It was noticeable that many students revealed their understanding of an issue through the course of their paper as they grappled with an issue's complexity and importance. Overall, students kept well to the topic under discussion, exhibiting much less confusion compared with previous years between, for example, the political and economic dimensions of an issue.

As noted, student essays were generally of a high quality with a wide variety of arguments and examples. The essay topics may have appeared general enough (or *novel* enough) to allow students many different avenues of approach. Instead of trying to recall and to shoehorn specific lessons of previously modeled arguments, examples, or outlines into their essays, many students relied on their own wits and wrote in their own words. The result was clearer, more focused, and more purposeful writing than in the past. There may be an important lesson here. Excessively coaching students to answer "typical" topic A or B questions may be counterproductive. The best preparation is to provide students opportunities to develop confidence in using their own analytic skills.

Along with these very positive observations, markers did suggest a number of cautions regarding student achievement. While there is more evidence of student planning and wise use of the available additional time to develop various approaches to planning, in many papers there seemed to be less attention to correcting errors in word choice, basic conventions, and sentence structure. As one marker asked, "a high percentage of students did some sort of planning—now, could we do something to get them to do editing and proofreading as well?"

Another point raised by markers concerned the effective use of supportive examples from current events. *Should conjecture be considered as evidence?* For example, in addressing Topic B, a common approach used by some students was to contend that since the Cold War was over, the world was now free from the necessity for large militaries. These same students discounted or ignored current international instability or the power vacuum created by the demise of the former Soviet Union. Markers cautioned that students need to be advised that, used appropriately, the most recent of events can suggest *possibilities* but not necessarily *certainties*.

Many students, in dealing with Topic A, presented some interesting and unanticipated approaches to the issue. For example, some students developed quite conceptually complex essays by recognizing that the extent to which an individual should express disagreement may vary according to the political system under which the individual lives. A notable feature of the Topic A essays was the wide range of examples used to illustrate and support arguments, examples that often went beyond the Social Studies 30 curriculum to encompass content from previous social studies courses and current affairs. As one standard confirmer wrote, "It is heartening to note that regardless of the approach employed, the vast majority of students demonstrated an understanding of the role of dissent in democratic systems and indeed recognized the practical and moral importance of the expression of dissent in advancing democratic government and protecting individual rights." It would appear that many students completing Social Studies 30 demonstrated an internalized appreciation of responsible citizenship and tolerance.

Students writing the Topic B assignment often reflected upon the contrast between "what determines a nation's status" and "what should determine a nation's status?" Many students further explored the issue by examining how the context of international relations has changed since the end of the Cold War and since the expansion of the global economy. An additiona level of complexity was also introduced in the students' interpretation of the word "status." While many interpreted it to mean "power" or "the ability to influence events," others took the term to mean "prestige," "recognition by other nations," or "international regard." Whatever the approach, students effectively used a variety of examples ranging from evidence of military strength, economic success, and participation in peacekeeping, to membership in international organizations.

Students achieving the acceptable standard were able to express an adequate understanding of the complexity and significance of an issue. These writers often recognized the principles underlying different viewpoints associated with an issue and generally established a historical or a contemporary frame of reference to an issue's importance. Students achieving the standard of excellence perceptively investigated the complexity and significance of the issue, often throughout the fabric of their response. Such students were comfortable in revealing to the reader what they genuinely thought, rather than attempting to write what they felt the reader wanted to hear. It was also apparent that many students enjoyed the challenge of composing their responses and many expressed a refreshing optimism about the future of the world.

As in the previous administrations, many students demonstrated an awareness that a stronger position paper is developed by establishing a basis for each argument or reason and then applying specific historical and contemporary examples as supportive evidence for each argument. Students achieving the acceptable standard supported their position with several adequate arguments. Although these arguments lacked in elaboration and depth of understanding, they were connected to the issue under discussion and to the position taken. Supportive evidence used by these writers to bolster an argument was generally relevant but not error free, and more often general rather than specific in presentation. Such writers, despite making minor errors, demonstrated control of conventions.

Students achieving below the acceptable standard did not link their examples in a meaningful way to their positions and often exhibited vagueness and confusion with key social studies concepts. They developed evidence primarily in descriptive terms, unloading as much data as they could recall and thus exhibiting little sense of its organization and applicability. Superficial descriptions of detail and the presentation of extraneous information resulted in lower scores. Students achieving below the satisfactory level demonstrated poor control of conventions.

Students achieving the standard of excellence composed powerful and forceful arguments that were firmly rooted in the application of germane, well-chosen evidence—evidence that in many instances supported a qualified position. Students at this level wrote carefully organized essays essentially free from errors in mechanics and grammar.

Overall, it was apparent that the demands of the June 1995 assignments were within the comprehension of most students. It was also apparent that many students enjoyed the challenge of composing their responses and many expressed a refreshing optimism about the future of the world.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

	Part A	Part B
A	23.4%	12.6%
B	30.2%	19.2%
C	29.1%	42.9%
F	17.3%	25.3%

While it is not intended that parts A and B of the examination be considered as separate examinations or that each part necessarily tests the same curricular objectives, it is interesting to see the distribution of student results. In June 1995, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part A of the examination than on Part B, and considerably more students were awarded scores in the "F" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. These scores do not signal a new phenomenon but represent similar results achieved over past administrations.

Readers are reminded that a new Samples of Student Writing document based on essays written from the January 1995 administration should be available for the fall of 1995.

For further information, contact Barry Jonas or Elana Scraba at the Student Evaluation Branch, 403-427-0010.

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